

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 03286 101008Z
ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AF-10 ARA-06 EA-07
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3286

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PARM, ICRC, IS, XF
SUBJECT: DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN LAW - RED SHIELD AMENDMENT

REFS: (A) STATE 105672 (B) STATE 104429 (C) GENEVA 3509
(D) GENEVA 3437 (E) GENEVA 3241

1. AT A MEETING ON MAY 9 WITH EYTAN RONN, MFA POLITICAL
ADVISOR FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, WE WENT OVER THE
QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S PRESSING FOR A VOTE ON ITS RED SHIELD
AMENDMENT. WE SAID THAT OUR JUDGMENT WAS THAT THE
AMENDMENT WOULD BE OVERWHELMINGLY DEFEATED AND WE
BELIEVE SUCH A DEFEAT MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THE CURRENT
DE FACTO RESPECT FOR THE EMBLEM.

2. RONN WAS OBVIOUSLY PREPARED FOR OUR DEMARCHE AND
GAVE US A FIRM RESPONSE. HE SAID HE HAD ATTENDED
A MEETING THAT AFTERNOON IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S
OFFICE ON THE QUESTION AND WAS IN A POSITION TO GIVE
US THE FINAL ISRAELI DECISIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 03286 101008Z

3. ISRAEL BELIEVES THAT THE DE FACTO RECOGNITION
GIVEN TO THE RED SHIELD SHOULD NOT AND IN FACT
WILL NOT BE LESSENERED BY PRESSING FOR A VOTE. IN
THE FIRST PLACE, THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT
THAT SIGNATORIES TO THE IRC CONVENTION RECOGNIZE
HOSPITALS, AMBULANCES AND MEDICAL INSTALLATIONS,

REGARDLESS OF THEIR EMBLEM. SECOND, AND OF PERHAPS GREATER IMPORTANCE, THE QUESTION OF BATTLEFIELD RECOGNITION OF MEDICAL FACILITIES IS RECOGNIZED BY ISRAEL'S OPPONENTS AS BEING A RECIPROCAL ISSUE AND THE AWARENESS THAT ISRAEL COULD AND WOULD RETALIATE MEANS THAT, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, NO CHANGE IS TO BE EXPECTED IN THE DE FACTO RECOGNITION.

4. THAT BEING SAID, THE GOI HAS DECIDED THERE IS MERIT IN SEEKING AS MANY STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE IN THE CONFERENCE SO THOSE STATEMENTS WILL REMAIN ON THE RECORD. ISRAEL DOES NOT EXPECT TO WIN THE VOTE ON THE AMENDMENT BUT IT SEES THIS AS ONE STEP IN A LONG RANGE CAMPAIGN WHICH IT EXPECTS TO CONTINUE IN THE YEARS AHEAD AT FUTURE CONFERENCES. IN SUM, ISRAEL DISAGREES WITH US -- IT DOES HAVE SOMETHING TO GAIN AND, BECAUSE OF THE CONSIDERATIONS MENTIONED ABOVE, NOTHING TO LOSE BY HAVING THE DEBATE AND THE VOTE ON THE AMENDMENT.

5. RONN ALSO REFERRED TO THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH AROSE IN THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN ROSENNE AND ALDRICH ON APRIL 29 (REFTEL D). HE SAID THAT IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN ATMOSPHERE ANY STEP WHICH WOULD BE PERCEIVED AS A RETREAT FROM A FIRM POSITION WOULD BE GIVEN MEDIA TREATMENT AND WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 03286 101008Z

BE SEIZED UPON BY THE OPPOSITION AS A CAMPAIGN ISSUE.

6. WE SAID THAT WHEN THE AMENDMENT CAME TO A VOTE, ISRAEL COULD BE ASSURED OF U.S. SUPPORT. RONN EXPRESSED ISRAEL'S APPRECIATION FOR THIS STATEMENT.
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